

Be my Valentine by Mylesime

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Summary:

Mike is an Alpha, in love with Will, an Omega, in a world where social roles between Alphas and Omegas are very strongly defined. Alphas are bred to be aggressive rulers. Omegas, obedient and quiet followers. But Will isn't like the other Omegas. He's feisty and independent and refuses to bend to an Alpha's will, to his mother's dismay. Furthermore, the physical particularities of Alphas make it that most Omegas fear them and keep away, rendering healthy relationships between Alphas and Omegas basically impossible. Mike is however determined to win Will over and prove everyone wrong.

1. The Omega who didn't want to be picked

Author's Note:

Hi guys! I've wanted to write an ABO verse for Byler in a while and there it is!

At first, I wanted to do an Alpha Will but I got this idea stuck in my head so I wrote it down.

I hope you'll like it :)

Today wasn't any ordinary day. It was the day Mike would do it. The day he'd finally get the courage. He knew his chances were slim but he would do it. He wouldn't back out. He still hadn't completely figured out his plan. Probably a gentle confrontation after school. Omegas were in another building anyway so he couldn't talk to him before two hours. Three weeks more and it would be the end of the year. After that, it would be the summer break and he'd probably never see him again.

Today was the day.

His last class was a bore. Emotional Management. Or how to teach him that he was a dangerous, impulsive beast, that it was in his nature, that he couldn't change but learn some control. Great. So encouraging!

He sighed against his locker, resting his forehead on the cool metal. From the corner of his eye, he saw a shadow approach, blocking his vision.

"Hey Wheeler," Dustin greeted.

"Henderson," Mike greeted back a bit more coldly without looking up from his locker.

"Lucas told me what you planned on doing. Was he serious?"

"About what?" Mike said, taking appropriate books for his next period.

"The dance," Dustin clarified, "Are you really going to do it?"

Mike slipped his books under his arm, closed his locker with his free hand and headed up back to class.

"It's the last months of High school," he replied, walking, "My last chance. If I don't do it now, I'll never have the occasion again. I have to try."

Dustin walked passed him and stopped, blocking Mike's path.

"Look, I know you like him. A lot. And I understand why. I mean, he's a cute little Omega -"

"- I don't care about that!" Mike snapped angrily, "He could be a Beta or even an Alpha, it would be all the same!"

"Ok. Still, I understand. But you're wasting your time Mike. I know Byers. I've talked to him already. He's on suppressants. He's been very clear on the fact that he doesn't want to be an Alpha's bitch!"

Mike opened his mouth, offended.

"I don't want him to be my bitch!"

Dustin frowned, "Then what do you want? You're an Alpha... He's an Omega..."

"I don't want that kind of relationship!" Mike spat with a grimace of disgust, "It's gross and sordid!"

"Then what?" Dustin blinked, confused.

Mike bit his lip impatiently, "I just... want to be with him. Try. You know..."

Dustin's frown deepened, "No, I don't."

Mike sighed, ran his hand through his hair nervously, "Just. Let it go. Ok?"

He pushed Dustin on the side, desperate to put as much distance

between them. Behind him, Dustin shook his head.

“He’s gonna send you packing! He’s a feisty little Omega that one. Not obedient like the others!”

Mike huffed but didn’t turn back. He didn’t want an obedient Omega! Didn’t care for Omegas! Yes, they smelled good and he could feel his instinct kick in whenever close to one but that was beside the point. Will was different. He was an Omega but Mike didn’t care about that. He liked Will for his temper and artistic talent. He liked Will for standing his ground. Liked how he never seemed to let anyone he cared about down. And the fact that Will was so cute certainly was a pleasant bonus he wasn’t going to disregard either.

Traditional relationships between Alphas and Omegas had always disgusted him. They were everything but equal and healthy. And he didn’t find the idea of having a spiritless sex slave appealing. Quite contrary. He knew how things worked, had attended every biology class. His parents had also pestered him enough to sign for the Selections and pick an Omega and clearly this wasn’t something he wanted. He wanted someone to love and care for. Not use and abuse like most Alphas did.

Dustin couldn’t understand! He was a Beta! Neither did Lucas or Max. They were way too bitter over the failure of their own relationship to be supportive. Instinct was impossible to ignore, Lucas said. Well, to Hell with that! He was going to try. No matter what everybody else thought. Even if Will rejected him in the end. At least, he would have had zero regret.

He spent his last period rehearsing what he’d say to the Omega in his head. Alphas and Omegas barely interacted, kept apart in separate buildings to avoid complications - especially when one of the Omegas was in heat. And Omegas were so terrified of Alphas, they never encouraged conversation or proximity. Even Omegas already paired up with an Alpha hardly socialized with them on their own accord, waiting for their Alpha to engage first, like the good little Omegas they were bred to be. It annoyed Mike to no end. But could the Omegas really be blamed? Most Alphas were absolute jerks after all...

The hour seemed to drag on and he barely listened to the teacher. He peered up through the window, leaving his thoughts wander in the blue horizon. What would it be like to be free? To not have anyone dictate your life, telling you that you couldn't escape what you were and that fatality was all there was? He was sick of his life, sick of everyone telling him that Alphas were dangerous and aggressive, that he was no better than a beast. That his love for an Omega would turn grim at the first sign of a heat.

He was better than that.

“Remember, anticipation is key. Your Alpha's life is busy and complicated. As an Omega, your role is to ensure their basic needs are being fulfilled. They can't do that without you.”

Will rolled his eyes at his Domestic Studies teacher's words. Miss Rosie was nice. She was always perfectly pampered, all white blond hair and pink cheeks and she had the sweetest voice. But listening to her was a bore, like a colorful candy that burnt your tongue.

She turned to the class with her usual white smile.

“Now, if your Alpha comes back home after a long and stressful day, as their Omega, what can you do to help them relax? Bethany?”

A redhead girl smiled at the teacher, “I would make sure the house is clean and welcoming and cook their favorite dish.”

Miss Rosie smiled back, “Excellent. Very good.” She turned to another student, “Yes, Emerald?”

“I arrange a special evening doing all the things they like best.”

“Very good.”

She paused, the sound of her heels stopping on the wooden floor and focused on the one student who wasn't listening, nose buried in his book, doodling energetically, “Will?” He lifted his eyes to her. She held his gaze, “What would you do?”

He clicked his tongue on his palate before answering.

"I would get them a book on how to cook their own food and wipe their own ass," he replied very calmly, not blinking.

Obviously, it wasn't the answer she wanted and it was clear in the way her face fell and expression hardened. He bit his lip in a fake apologetic smile and shrugged before returning to his doodle. Around him, the others gasped in shock and disbelief. She continued her lesson, sending quick glances at him from time to time. He had returned to his sketchbook and wasn't listening. She let it go, knowing it was hopeless.

The bell rang the end of the day. All the students gathered their books and made way toward the exit, chatting enthusiastically with one another. Bethany, Will's friend since fifth grade, waited for him by the door as she always did so that they could take the bus together. She didn't agree with Will on many subjects, including his hatred toward Alphas or the order of things, but they still got along. She was loyal and supportive and brought Will comfort many times, including when he had to let his friends go. All in all, he owed her a great deal.

He was about to join her when Miss Rosie called him from her desk.

"Will? May I have a word?" she turned to Bethany who was waiting for Will by the door, "You can go, Bethany. Will will join you in a minute."

Bethany nodded and took her leave in silence. Will swallowed and turned around. She wasn't looking at him but her tall, slim body towered above the table, still and rather imposing even for an Omega. She waited that he joined her at her desk before continuing. For a long second, she merely looked at him, as if reading him through. Will knew what was coming.

"You're angry," she started, "I understand. You think your life is unfair and it scares you. You're not the first one and you won't be the last. But you're seventeen, William. It's time you work on those issues. If you keep this going, no Alpha will pick you."

He gathered his lips in a thin line of annoyance.

“Good, I don’t want an Alpha to pick me!”

She sighed, “You don’t want this kind of life, trust me. Life without an Alpha for an Omega is worse than exclusion. Think of your parents. You can’t do that to them.”

Will shrugged. His mother hardly ever said a word and his father hated him, always had. He could die in a gutter, for all Loonie cared, and Joyce was just too submissive to protest.

Miss Rosie considered Will for a moment, trying to find appropriate words that would speak to the rebellious teenager without antagonizing him, “You know, you could find a nice Alpha. An Alpha who’d take care of you and care for you. That’s why they’re here for. To care for you.”

Will didn’t agree. He would never agree. Alphas didn’t care for Omegas. They abused Omegas, turned them into toys. How many times had he heard Omega parents blame their child for staying outside too long without any supervision?!

“I don’t need anyone. I’m good.”

She nodded, not pushing, “Alright. But I do hope you reconsider and attend the selections. You’re a sweet kid. You’d make any Alpha happy.”

Will nodded out of politeness. He had no intention of going to the Selections. There was nothing more degrading, more humiliating than the Selections!

He found Bethany just outside the class, by the lockers, waiting for him.

“What did she want?” she asked as they began to walk down the hall, passing groups of students.

Will shrugged, “I’m a bad Omega.”

She frowned, studying him, “She’s not completely wrong, you know.

You could work on that temper of yours.”

“I like my temper.”

“It’s terrible.”

“If I can keep Alphas away, I’m good.”

She sighed, “Please, Will. Don’t be like that. You see it the wrong way.”

“Oh, because there’s a right way?”

“It’s a partnership. Miss Rosie tells us all the time. Alphas protect us.”

“No, that’s bullshit.”

She shook her head with a small sigh of exasperation, “The suppressants won’t always work you know. One day, you’ll be in heat and you won’t see it coming and you’ll be glad to have an Alpha to protect you and take care of it.”

Will huffed, “By injecting their venom in the deepest of me. Marking me as their own. No thank you. My body is mine.”

Bethany shrugged, “It’s not always so bad.”

“Oh please Bethany. You’ve followed the same biology classes as me. You’ve heard other Omegas who went through it. It’s horrible.”

“Some Alphas make an effort to be nice. My sister’s Alpha always tries to make it bearable for her.”

“Yeah. Bearable. No thank you. I’ll stay celibate. Or I’ll go with a Beta or another Omega. But no Alpha. I’d rather die.”

They made their way out the school, on the stairs that led to the parking lot. Omegas were all rushing to the buses that took them home. Only Alphas and Betas were allowed to have their own cars and drive. Due to their hormones, Omegas were considered incompetent and could only take the bus or be driven by Alphas or Betas for their protection.

“Betas can’t help you through heats,” Bethany continued as they descended the second stair. “Only Alphas can.”

“I don’t care. If I have to take a higher dose of suppressants, I will.”

“Suppressants are toxic.”

“I don’t care.”

He would have argued more but they had reached the final stair and Mike Wheeler, an Alpha from a very prestigious Alpha bloodline, was standing there, looking at Will expectantly. The two Omegas froze. Alphas never came so close, unless they wanted to pick their Omega.

“Hey Will,” Mike said, swallowing, hands in pockets.

The Omega girl immediately took her distance, uncomfortable to be so close to an Alpha. Mike didn’t react. He was used to Omegas being scared.

“I’ll wait for you in the bus,” she said to Will, not making eye contact with Mike.

Will nodded blankly, his eyes fixed on the Alpha with a frown of confusion. Mike cleared his throat. God, it was a whole lot more awkward than he thought. But he could do it. It wasn’t the moment to chicken out.

“Hi,” Will said, more carefully.

They hadn’t spoken to each other in years and it felt odd. Mike bounced on his feet, biting his lip, looking at Will then his shoes in search of something Will couldn’t see.

“Hi,” he said again, awkwardly.

Will’s frown deepened, “Hi,” he repeated.

Mike licked his lip. He looked in pain.

“Can I, talk to you for a minute?” he managed to say after a full minute of silence.

Will blinked.

“Ok,” he answered slowly.

Mike took a deep breath, barely able to make eye contact. This was the moment he had been waiting all day. Seconds passed again but no sound left his mouth. The words were stuck in the back of his throat. *Do you want to go to the dance with me?* Clearly, this wasn't so difficult?! In front of him, the other boy was still as a statue, waiting. Mike nibbled his lip, licked it, bit it again. It could have been five minutes already and he still couldn't talk.

“I...” he began awkwardly, clearing his throat to give himself countenance, “I was wondering... Are you going to the dance?” he blurted out.

Will blinked in confusion but didn't say anything.

Mike continued, just as painfully. “Because I was wondering... Do you...” he swallowed, “Do you want to go with me? To the dance? With me?”

God, this was awful. Even to his own ears. Will frowned and Mike felt the first premise of a rejection.

“To the dance?” Will repeated, “With you?”

“I'm not asking you anything,” Mike hurried to add, “But I would really like to go with you. If that's ok and you want to, of course!”

Long seconds passed during which Will didn't say a thing and they felt like the longest seconds in Mike's life.

“I...” Will started and Mike opened with huge, hopeful eyes, “I'll... think about it.”

Mike's shoulders fell, “Oh. Ok. Great!” It was still better than a no.

Will bit his lip in a nervous smile, “Yeah.”

“That's great!” Mike repeated like a broken record.

“Yeah, I'll tell you.”

“Ok. Great.”

“Yeah.”

“Ok.”

They kept staring at each other awkwardly for what felt the longest, most uncomfortable minutes ever, before Will suddenly jolted and shifted on his feet.

“I should get going. My bus will leave without me.”

“I can drive you home if you want?”

The words left his mouth before he could stop them and he berated himself for his stupidity. Now the Omega looked even more uncomfortable than before. *Way to go Wheeler!*

“Uh thanks...” Will responded slowly, “Another time maybe.”

Really, Mike wanted to slap himself. What an idiot! Why did he have to say that?

“Of course. Sure. I understand.”

Will nodded. They smiled and chuckled awkwardly at each other.

“I'll go now,” Will said.

“Sure. Enjoy your evening!”

“You too!” Will nodded again before sprinting toward the bus, his bag secured on his shoulder and Mike watched him go, his heart dancing in his chest.

Will didn't look behind him and headed straight into the bus. Bethany was waiting for him on their usual spot and he hurried to join her, falling heavily on his seat, letting his bag sink to his feet.

“So?” she asked, “What did he want?”

Will shrugged, “To talk.”

“Oh come on Will,” she said, rolling her eyes, “Don't play me for a fool! Alphas don't wait by the Omega building just to talk! He looked nervous!”

He sighed, knowing she wouldn't let that one go, “He asked me to the dance.”

“The dance? You mean, to go with him?”

“Yes.”

She jumped on her seat, “Oh my God! I can't believe you're going to get picked before me! And Wheeler is such a prized Alpha! You lucky bastard!”

He widened his eyes in disbelief, “What?! No, no, no! No one is picking me! I didn't even say yes!”

She gave him a long, hard look, “Wait. What do you mean you didn't say yes?! How couldn't you say yes?!” She sounded shocked and it annoyed him immensely.

“It's not because he's an Alpha that I have to do what he wants! I didn't say no either. I said that I'll think about it.”

She shook her head slowly, “You're an idiot, Byers. A huge idiot.”

“And I'm happy that way.”

“Good for you. I can't believe you said no to an Alpha like Wheeler.”

“I didn't say no.”

“Still. You're being difficult.”

Will shrugged.

They didn't talk after that. Will's eyes were glued on the window across, watching the trees blur by.

The bus stopped in front of his small house and he waved Bethany goodbye before jumping off, taking a deep breath. He could almost hear them from where he was, his father's screams. Loud, hauntingly constant. With another breath, he walked the few steps that separated him from the door and turned the handle. Heavy silence welcomed him inside and the smell of cold tobacco that perspired through the walls.

"You're late," barked the unmistakable voice of Loonie.

He sighed, hung his jacket on the hanger and took a few steps into the tiny lounge room. His father was in his usual armchair in front of the television set that played the same old football games he never tired to watch. The curtains were barely letting any light in and a few cans of beer laid around the chipped table on his side with an ashtray full of long dead cigarettes. Will swallowed. The whole room reeked of warm beer and smoke. It was nauseating.

"Where have you been?" he barked again.

"At school."

"Don't play coy with me, boy! You should have been here fifteen minutes ago!"

He winced. His father's voice had risen to that tone which made his heart miss a beat. It did it every time.

"Sorry Sir," Will whispered cautiously, careful not to aggravate his Alpha father any further. Alpha anger always was formidable, especially his father's.

"What is going on?" the quiet, scared voice of his mother rose from the kitchen she was emerging from to join them, a pan in the hands she was still wiping with a towel.

She was wearing the dull green dress she always wore, here eyes tired and heavy.

Loonie didn't look away from his television, his eyes glued on the

match, a cigarette between his lips, “Your slut of a son missed Curfew again.”

Joyce swallowed and turned to Will.

“I’m sure it wasn’t his fault,” she tried.

Loony snapped immediately, “I didn’t ask for your opinion, Omega!” he looked up at the clock on the wall that indicated nearly 6.30, “I’m hungry. You should be preparing dinner instead of sneaking your nose into things that don’t concern you.”

Joyce looked like she wanted to argue but was too scared of her Alpha to say anything. She turned to Will, trembling a little. Will decided to put an end to it and reached for her arm.

“Come on, mom. I’ll help you.”

He pushed Joyce toward the kitchen so they could retreat in what little shelter they could find, away from the Alpha’s wrath and began to prepare dinner in relative silence. Joyce grabbed vegetables from the cupboard and Will attacked the pile of dirty dishes.

“The Principal called,” Joyce said after a while, “He wanted to remind us that the Selections are in two weeks and you still haven’t signed up.”

Will sighed and scrubbed a plate more aggressively, “I don’t want to go the Selections mom!”

She bit her lip, searching her words carefully, “It could be interesting to go. I know you want to stay celibate. I know Will. You made that very clear, sweetheart and I respect your decision. But going couldn’t hurt. Maybe you’d find an Alpha you actually like.”

He growled, “An Alpha like dad you mean?”

She immediately went livid and made hurried, panicked gestures with her hands, checking to every corner of the small, packed kitchen in fear Loonie had hear.

“Be quiet, Will! You don’t want him to hear you!”

"I don't want an Alpha. I don't want to be picked like a trophy on the shelf."

He knew how things worked. Alphas picked their Omega. The contrary wasn't true. And he had no desire of being exposed to famished Alphas in search of a chewing toy.

Joyce sighed, "Being celibate is hard, Will."

He shrugged. He knew the implications. He'd be alone all his life. No partner. No sex. Celibate Omegas vowed to remain chaste for the rest of their life. Will didn't mind. He'd rather stay with himself than endure the heats and mating cycles.

The noise of a door echoed in the silent house and a voice rose from the walls, "I'm home!"

It was Jonathan, Will's brother. Contrary to Will, Jonathan was an Alpha and he was their father's pride. Alphas were usually devastated when they birthed Omega offsprings. Omegas were necessary for the survival of the race but it didn't stop the general disdain and bias society held toward them. Fragile, weak, submissive and passive. Unable to think for themselves and care for themselves. Pitifully needy when in heat. Vulnerable when conquered. Will had heard it all. And his father never spared him any jab or reminder of what a failure of a son he was. Because being a male Omega was even worse than being an Omega in itself. It was the utmost dishonor and young male Omegas often were abandoned by their family to avoid the shame. Orphanages were full of those unwanted poor souls.

Loonie's voice immediately thundered from his chair, "Johnny!" he said, greeting his favorite kid.

"Hey Dad!" he heard Jonathan respond.

Will sniffled and opened the cupboard to get a pile of plates, setting the table for four like he did everyday. His mother turned to him, watching him with a gentle, tired smile. Her sweet boy.

The kitchen door flew open on Loonie, red as a balloon about to burst. He was hungry. He eyed his wife and son and took his seat

without a word, waiting for his food. Jonathan followed him, biting his lip as a smile to his brother.

“Hey Will,” he said quietly, taking his own seat.

“Hey,” Will nodded back in a whisper.

He finished setting the table while his mother brought the steaming pot that would serve as dinner.

“Will, a beer,” his father barked and Will obeyed, his lips tightening in a thin line.

Alone in the darkness of his bedroom, Mike couldn't sleep. It was already late but his eyes were wide open. His curtains were still open on the street and the lamp cast enough light through his window for him to see. His brain was rewinding his confrontation with Will over and over again, tirelessly. He was feeling a mix of nervous, terrified and excited all at once, so fast he couldn't really focus on his emotions. The Omega hadn't said yes but he hadn't said no either. He smiled a small smile of hope, turned on his side and slid his hand under his pillow to retrieve a picture he hid inside the pillowcase. It was a picture of Will he had managed to get from an Omega for a price. Will was talking to his friends, smiling. He was so cute, Mike's heart leapt in his chest as it always did whenever he saw his beautiful face. He thought about their conversation again. Will hadn't said no. He hadn't looked ecstatic at the prospect of going with Mike but he hadn't said no! It was something!

Mike sighed to himself, took a deep breath of courage.

With a bit of luck, maybe he'd have a chance!

Content and full of newlyfound hope, he turned on his side again and closed his eyes, the picture secured under his pillow, against his palm.

2. And the Alpha who wanted to be loved

Notes for the Chapter:

Hey guys! I know, it's been ages but I finally got the inspiration for a new chapter. I hope you'll like it!

WARNING: ABO universe so it's kind of dark even if I'm trying to make something less gross than usual in those stories. So, crude languages, dark and disturbing themes...

Mike woke up at his usual hour, a bit more excited than most days. He hoped Will would give him an answer today, preferably a positive one. He would accept a refusal, of course, but Will accepting to go to the Dance with him would make him so happy.

He took his shower and dressed in his usual Alpha uniform, black vest and black pants with his family blazon on his chest, an intricate W sewn in red. The blazon of the Wheelers. If the clothes matched his jet black hair, they contrasted with his pale skin and dark eyes. They were Alpha attributes but Mike didn't like them too much. He preferred the gentle glow of the Omegas and their bright round eyes. Will had golden brown hair and caramel skin. He looked like the Sun. He was beautiful. Mike hated how grey his own skin looked, like an unpainted drawing, a dull, unfinished sketch. His lips were dark too, almost crackled in black. It was gross. Will's lips were full and pink. Kissable lips that looked so soft, so inviting. He blinked at his reflection. He was getting dreamy again. He didn't like his eyes either. Deep burgundy eyes that turned vermillion red under the light. Killer eyes. Will's were green like a meadow in Spring. He often got lost in them and was pretty sure he could have spent Eternity swimming in their depth.

He finished preparing himself, combing his hair and applying cologne on his cheeks, before joining his family for breakfast.

He found them already at the table in their much too large Dining room, enjoying their first meal of the day in silence. His dishes were waiting for him at his usual spot, next to his younger sister, Holly.

Fresh fruits, oatmeal, scrambled eggs and blueberry pancakes were slowly cooling in their plates of silver, all prepared by Anabel, their Omega housekeeper.

He took his seat and looked around him. His mother wiped her mouth with her napkin, smiling at her son with her much too white teeth. She looked like a painting of sophistication, her golden skin complimented by a white dress and bronze hair styled in ribbons and pearls. Her hands were covered in white gloves she never removed in public. She was an Omega but having married into a wealthy family, she didn't have to do most of the chores Omegas from poorer unions did. She just had to stay silent and keep her gloves on.

At the other side of the table, throned his father, a stern looking man who's only active Alpha attribute was to squint his red eyes at those who dared question the absoluteness of his authority. Mike barely talked to him at all. He was much closer to his mother and he smiled back at her, letting her gentle beauty soothe his sorrows away.

His sister gave him a small smile as a morning greeting to which he replied. She was too young to have presented but already had the grey skin of the Alphas. There was a high chance she was like him. His other sister, Nancy, was also an Alpha. She was off to College and he hadn't seen her in months. He missed her although they bickered quite often. She was more dominant and more aggressive than him, like most female Alphas.

He took a bite of his pancake and grabbed the handle of his tea cup, attacking his breakfast with an average appetite. He wasn't really hungry but the food was delicious and it made him feel warm and happy inside, full for a short moment. It was a good way to start his day.

At the other side of the table, his father cleared his throat and Mike's fork froze in his mouth.

"I received a phone call from the Principal, Micheal," he said in that grumpy voice Mike hated, "He reminded me that the Selections were coming and that you still hadn't signed. It's high time you do, don't you think?"

Mike sighed and rolled his eyes. Those ridiculous Selections! He had no intention of going. It was the most awful, most sordid place he had ever seen. Selections mostly consisted of having Alphas choose their Omega slave, displayed on a stage, half naked for their future owner to judge and assess. Nowadays, rules in America were stricter but Mike knew abuse still happened at many of those events that belonged to older times. Omegas stripped naked and touched without their consent. He had seen it first hand as a child when assisting one of them with his father and aunt. He was eight then. The Omega's body had been violated and dishonored on that stage. The man who presented him put his hands everywhere and talked of him as if he were an animal for slaughter, the Alphas laughing and cheering as his most intimate parts were exposed to all. It was obscene and made Mike sick for days.

So, going to those awful Selections himself and participating in this disgraceful masquerade? Not in a million years! He wanted to marry for love, not power.

Nancy had gone too - she had been forced to go - and the portrayal she gave him of those places hadn't been much better, even nine years later. Rules were stricter but castration for male Omegas was still considered the norm. Female Omegas could be *modified* too although it was a bit more tricky. Mike shivered. What a horrible tradition. Many Omegas still died from complications and no one batted an eyelash about that. And what was the purpose of mutilating them? What pleasure could an Alpha obtain from bringing nothing but pain to their Omega? Mike would never understand.

From what he knew, Nancy had found an Omega but not in the Selections, in her University. His name was Steve. He had never met him but he sounded like a nice guy. He came from a modern mixed family. Beta mother and Omega father, fighting against the tradition of the Selections. Ted didn't know of course. He would have had a stroke. His daughter was seeing an Omega, that's all that mattered to him.

He ignored his father and poured some oatmeal on his plate, next to his fruits.

"I'm not going," he said without even blinking.

The answer was loud and firm and Karen choked beside him. He heard Ted slam his coffee cup on the table and it sounded like a chase of elephants coming out of his father's hand.

"What have you said?"

"I said that I wasn't going," he repeated, looking at his father, "father."

Ted's features contorted in anger and his brow knitted at his son's insolence. Beside him, Karen bent forward and touched his thigh under the table.

"Mike, please," she whispered, looking visibly scared.

Mike held his ground and kept his eyes on his father, "I don't like the Selections. They're awful. I'm not going."

Ted licked his lip, something he always did whenever he was feeling cross. He took a deep breath and closed his eyes.

"We'll talk about this later," he said, "You'll be late for school."

Mike rolled his eyes again and finished his breakfast in silence, feeling his mother's eyes on him. Beside him, Holly raised her brow at him, silently judging her brother's impertinence.

Will hadn't slept much that night. Even if he hadn't wanted to, he spent most of his sleep time devoted to Mike Wheeler and his unexpected invitation. What an awkward situation... Honestly, had Mike not been an Alpha, he would have agreed to go with him. Wheeler was very handsome after all. He wasn't one of the most popular guys in school for nothing. And he kind of was Will's type - the overall charisma, not the Alpha physical traits - so yes, Will could have gone with him.

But Wheeler *was* an Alpha and Will had always promised himself he wouldn't bend to an Alpha's will. It was a matter of pride. It wasn't just social. Will knew how Alphas were made. He had attended his biology classes after all. And what he learned there was terrifying.

The mating process sounded terribly painful and awfully humiliating. The knotting part and the spikes poking out of their genitalia?! No, thank you! There was no way he'd risk that. Not ever. Not even for Wheeler's eyes which he had pretty. Not to mention their dirty habit to dominate Omegas and hurt them for sport. It just wasn't his notion of fun.

"Will? Will, your father is talking to you."

Will snapped out of his thoughts and returned to the family table, his brother and mother looking at him expectantly. He blinked. Across from him, Loonie was staring at him with a grimace of disgust.

"Have your slut hormones made you deaf already?!" he barked.

Will swallowed, "I'm sorry, Sir. I didn't hear."

Loonie eyed him disdainfully, munching on his bacon bite with his mouth open and Will could see the food being crushed between his tongue and his yellow teeth. It was nauseating.

"I said, have you signed up for the Selections? They've been harassing us for over a week."

Will licked his lip and looked down at his bowl, "No."

"And why not?"

"Because I don't want to."

The answer dropped off his lips, loud and confident, and he heard his mother take a sharp intake of air.

"You don't want to?" Loonie repeated in a slur.

Will held his gaze, "No."

There was a moment of heavy silence and only the sound of Loonie munching loudly on his bacon could be heard. Father and son were observing one another defiantly, ignoring the other two people around them.

"Why?" Loonie slurred again, "Afraid they're gonna cut off your tiny dick?" he scoffed, "From what you'll make of it anyway..."

Will didn't blink, "You don't know about that."

Loonie's parted lips froze and he stopped eating. He squinted his eyes a bit and raised his brow. He looked almost impressed, as he always was whenever Will showed some aggressivity. The little he had of Alpha in him, his father said.

"I see," he whispered in a dirty smile, swallowing loudly, "Well, it's bad enough having a boy Omega, I'd appreciate if you could abstain from turning into an Alpha whore. The last thing I want is to have my son used as a broodmare like a pussy."

Will flinched and felt a surge of rage wash him over. He had no intention of turning into an Alpha whore, even less of being used as a *broodmare*. Those were ones of the reasons he stayed away from Alphas. He was better than that.

"I have no intention to," he spat hatefully.

Loonie assessed his son, his smile disappearing into a serious scowl, "Good. You still have some sense in you after all. Your slut hormones haven't completely eaten at your brain."

Will didn't reply. He stared at his father with a grimace of disdain. Beside them, Joyce and Jonathan were moving on their chairs. They were uncomfortable.

Silence returned for a short while. Will finished his cereal and hurried to clean the empty plates, helping his mother as best as he could before going to school. Joyce didn't say anything but smiled at her son, a soft, sad smile as she watched him put the plates in the sink of their tiny kitchen.

Loonie turned his attention to his other son, "It's a shame you didn't sign when you still could. You're an Alpha. It's your duty to go."

Jonathan shrugged, not looking at his father, "I'm not interested in the Selections," he said.

Loonie resumed his eating, popping a bite of bacon into his mouth, "It's a shame. You're already working. It's time you find an Omega and settle. You won't stay here forever. I need someone to pass on the name and the good genes."

Will ignored the jab, focusing on his dishes instead.

Jonathan frowned, "I don't know, dad. I'm ok on my own... I don't need an Omega."

"You say that now. Won't say that always."

Jonathan shrugged, "We'll see."

"As long as you don't bring me a Beta..." he muttered.

The conversations stopped. Will glanced at his brother who was giving him a long, silent look. He knew there was more than just not being interested in the Selections. Jonathan despised them but it wasn't just a matter of disdain. There was something else. But they weren't close enough to share secrets on what. Not anymore anyway.

He joined Bethany on the bus. It used to be Jonathan taking him to school but ever since he finished High School, Will had to take the bus alone. And since he was an Omega, he wasn't allowed to drive which really sucked.

She waved at him and he took his seat next to her. The bus was one of the only places where he felt rather safe. There were only Omegas there and a few Betas.

"Hey," she greeted him with a smile.

He smiled back and pushed his bag between his feet as he sat, the bus' engine roaring back to life.

"So," she said.

"So what?" he answered, knowing fully well what she was going to say.

“Have you taken your decision?”

“About what?”

She rolled her eyes, “Wheeler! What will you say to him?”

He shrugged, “I don’t know yet. I still haven’t decided.”

Bethany stared at him as if he were stupid, “Honestly, Will, you can’t say no to an Alpha like Wheeler. That’s just... No. You can’t.”

He frowned at her, “I do what I want!”

“Yes, but it’s Wheeler! He’s so handsome! Come on, you got to admit that he’s super hot.”

Will was about to answer when another Omega joined the conversation from his seat across from them, “Who’s hot?” he asked.

Will rolled his eyes.

“Wheeler,” Bethany said instead.

The Omega, whose name was Bryan, nodded frantically, “He is.”

He was tall for an Omega and blond. Will knew he had already signed for the Selections. The guy could barely shut up about it!

Will looked away with a grimace of annoyance. This was a fight he wouldn’t win.

“Come on, Bryan, not you! You don’t even like guys,” Will protested in a whine.

“No, but he is one fine specimen. Even I can see that.”

“And he’s rich!” Bethany added.

“Yes, super rich!” Bryan paroted.

Will shook his head, “I don’t care about any of that.”

“He’s hot, rich and he comes from a strong Alpha family with strong

Alpha blood. He's perfect! You can't have more perfect than that!"

Bryan nodded, "I hope I'll get picked by a female Alpha during the Selections but if he picks me, I'll be okay with that too."

Will shook his head in disgust. He just hated when Omegas spoke about themselves as if they were pieces of meat. It was so self-disrespectful. Will had never understood the point of that.

Bryan licked his lip and observed them both, "Why were you talking about Wheeler?"

Will gave Bethany an alarmed look, urging her to keep her mouth shut but she didn't and smirked at Bryan, spilling the beans in front of Will's horrified expression.

"Wheeler asked Will for the Dance!" she squealed.

Fortunately, her voice was low enough not to attract the whole bus. Will grimaced again. Not that! He really didn't need anyone to know.

Bryan's mouth opened in shock, "No! Did he?"

"Yes! And that idiot wants to say no!" Bethany said in the same high pitched voice.

Will flared his nostrils. No, he *really* didn't need any of that.

Bryan blinked a couple of times, processing the news with a little difficulty, "You want to say no to Micheal Wheeler? What is wrong with you? Getting picked by such an Alpha is a life chance!"

Will shook his head, trying to find some space to talk too, "I didn't say I was going to say no for sure. I just don't know if I want to go with him. I mean, I'm not into Alphas..."

"Yes, because you're so much better than us!" Bryan slurred.

"I never said that!"

"But you think that. Being picked by Wheeler is a chance for someone like us. You don't even realize it!"

“And you could do so much worse! The guy is hot as Hell, you’re super cute. Imagine the adorable little babies you’ll have!”

Will immediately gagged at that, “Ew, ew, ew! Please, Bethany don’t. I’m never having babies with anyone! Certainly not with an Alpha!”

Bethany shook her head, “You’re such a Prude.”

“I’m not a Prude!”

“Yes, you are.”

“Am not. I just don’t want this kind of life for myself. Can you respect that? Instead of trying to lock me into your little box.”

“But you were *made* for this life!” Bethany complained.

“No,” Will stubbornly responded.

Bryan shook his head, “You say that because you haven’t experienced any Heat yet. Wait until that happens... We’ll see if you’re still so smug then. I can assure you that you’ll be glad to have an Alpha like Wheeler willing to put their babies into you as your body burns and aches for their knot. You really don’t know what you’re talking about.”

Will gagged again. The bus stopped in front of the school and parked. He let Bethany and Bryan leave their seats before plunging his hand into the pocket of his dark green pants to retrieve a couple pills of Suppressants, popping them in his mouth, just in case. He was feeling ill.

Mike knew he wouldn’t be able to see Will all morning. He had been busy with class and the Omega building was too far to go between two periods. He also knew Will wouldn’t come here. Alphas could visit the Omega building but the contrary wasn’t true.

Announcements for the upcoming Selections had been plastered all over the walls and the students chatted about it excitingly. Only Mike didn’t seem thrilled about the event. Of course, there were other

Alphas who found the principle of the Selections old fashioned and sordid. Mike wasn't the exception. Things were slowly changing but it wasn't the norm and Alphas like Mike weren't the majority.

He followed his group to the dining Hall for lunch. Contrary to Omegas who only had a Cafeteria with a limited option of food, Alphas were served directly on the table, with plates filled with a grand variety of meals ready to be dug into. He had his usual table, the one he shared with other Alpha kids from other prestigious families. There were the Dukes twins, Alice and Vincent. Evelyn Normond. Charlie Townsend. And Jules Pitterson. His friends, Lucas and Maxine ate at another table, for Alpha kids from more middle class origins.

His eyes found them a bit further into the large XIXth century styled room and they both nodded at him in acknowledgment from their seats. He couldn't wait to join them after lunch. None of the students at his table were his friends. They were just his peers and they didn't exactly have the same views.

He filled his plate with purée and steak.

Around him, the conversations soon reverted to the Selections and the young Alphas began to share their excitement, much to Mike's dismay.

"I can't wait!" Vincent said. He was a short, bulky Alpha with small burgundy eyes and curly black hair.

"What do you think you'll pick?" Evelyn asked, battling the long black lashes that covered her purple eyes and porcelain skin.

Mike swallowed his bite with a lump. *What*. Not *who*. Things were off to a terrible start and unfortunately, he couldn't escape the discussion. Not this time. At the other side of the room, Mrs March, his head teacher, was scrutinizing the room with her hawk eyes, searching for any mishap she could severely punish.

He shivered.

Beside him, Vincent shrugged, "I don't know yet. I think I'll go for a

female. Even if male Omegas have their perks.”

Evelyn shook her head, “I think I’ll take a female too. I don’t like males that much.”

Jules opened his mouth. He was the only one at the table with fair hair, “Males are warmer and tighter than the females. They feel so much better. And they’re more fertile.”

Mike sighed. This was it, the moment he was going to be sick.

Charlie nodded, “That’s true. My sister picked a male. He already birthed three offspring in three years. He’s a birth machine!”

“Are the babies Alphas?” Alice asked.

“We don’t know yet but at least one of them is.”

Jules nodded his appreciation, “That’s good. Good pick.”

Vincent wrinkled, “I don’t know. Males don’t have boobs,” he said in a grimace, “I like boobs.”

“And they have a dick,” Evelyn added with a pout of disgust.

“You have a dick too, idiot!” Charlie mocked.

Evelyn shook her head with a snob expression, “I don’t have a dick. I have an *appendage*.”

“Which is basically the same -”

“- no it’s not!”

“- yes, it’s I! The only difference is that it retracts but it works the same.”

“No, it doesn’t.”

“Yes, it does!”

“No, it doesn’t! Ours are much cuter. And I like female Omegas better anyway. Dicks are *gross*.”

“Why do you even care? You can have their dick removed if you don’t like it,” Vincent argued, “That’s what I’ll do if I take a male!”

No, *this* was the moment Mike was going to be sick. He pushed his fork and plate away from him, feeling nauseous.

Charlie frowned at him, “You ok, Wheeler?”

Mike swallowed his purée and gagged, “Really, Vincent,” he said, turning to the boy, “You’ll mutilate your Omega?”

Vincent shrugged, “It’s for their own good. Besides, castrated Omegas are more faithful and more fertile.”

Mike rolled his eyes. The ridiculous tune they had been fed since Kindergarten.

“That’s bullshit,” he said. Vincent tried to talk but Mike didn’t let him, “Do you know what your Omega will feel when you touch him if you cut off his dick?” Vincent looked away with a sigh of exasperation, “Pain. Agony. That’s all he’ll be able to feel! The drill!”

“How do you know?” Vincent protested, “Are *you* an Omega?”

“Do you want me to cut off your dick?” Mike retorted.

Evelyn tried to calm the tensions, gesturing with her hands, “Guys, guys. Please.”

Mike ignored her. He was pissed, “Let’s cut off your dick to find out!” he snarled angrily at Vincent who shook his head.

“Mike...” Jules tried.

“What is wrong with you?” Mike continued, “Omegas are people! They’re not objects! They’re human beings! Human beings with whom you’ll have *children* one day! How can you talk like that? How can you say you’re ready to mutilate them and hurt them like it’s nothing! You guys are *sick*!”

There was a small pause. The five Alphas around him exchanged looks, waiting for Mike to calm down. After a full minute, Alice bent

toward Mike and began to speak very softly.

"Mike," she said, "I know you don't like to hear it but Omegas enjoy pain -" Mike looked away with a huff, "They are *wired* to enjoy pain."

"That's not true!"

"Yes, it is. And if you weren't a virgin because you want to save yourself for True love, you'd know! Omegas like being hurt. It's the truth. They couldn't be with us if they didn't. Can you imagine?"

"Mike," Charlie jibed in, "They really do. Last time I slept with an Omega, I was in Rut and she was in Heat. It was *insane*! My cock was too big for her and I was so excited, I couldn't keep the spikes in. I ripped her. It bled and everything. She was in *ecstasy*, man, kept begging me for more, asked me to slap her, pull her hair... She was enjoying herself and I was hurting her!"

Mike looked away with a gag.

"That's true, man!" Charlie defended himself.

"She was enjoying herself because she's been *socially pressured* to enjoy being treated this way!" Mike said, earning a snort from Charlie.

"Not this again..."

Mike continued, "If you teach your dog to walk on two legs to earn their food, they will do it, even if it hurts them. Because they know that's what you want from them, that's how they'll be fed, how they'll be noticed and gain approval. It's nothing more than mental conditioning."

Charlie gave him a long, annoyed look, shaking his head with a small grimace, "You're way out of your head, Wheeler. *Way* out of it."

"I'm not. And even if she liked it - maybe you're right, maybe she did - it's not because she enjoys being hurt that *all the other Omegas* do. It's not because one person likes something that everybody else automatically does. That's the issue with your thinking. You don't distinguish Omegas, you all put them in the same basket. They are

different people.”

“You need to get laid, man, for real,” Charlie mocked, a pink tongue poking between his black lips.

“You do know about the knotting process, don’t you?” Alice asked, ignoring Charlie who was shaking his head again.

“Yes!” Mike spat.

“It’s not exactly cute. I’m pretty sure it’s quite painful even. And without knotting, there wouldn’t be babies. So Omegas must enjoy pain or they couldn’t get pregnant. It’s biology.”

“That’s *your* biology...” Mike muttered between clenched teeth.

Alice held his gaze without emotion, “You’ve never been with an Omega in Heat but the day you are, you’ll understand.”

“Omegas like being owned and taken,” Jules snided, “They have been biologically programmed to.”

“And if you really want to talk about castration,” Vincent added, “Studies have shown that castrated Omegas are happier, make better spouses and have shorter Heats.”

Mike swallowed, “Whatever you say.”

He wanted to run. A quick glance at the clock indicated to him that lunch was almost over. He needed to see Will.

At the other end of the school, Will was observing Bethany eat raw carrots and a handful of spinach with a grimace of confusion. He had been locked into an anxiety crisis that lasted the full morning.

“You’re not hungry?” he asked.

She munched on her spinach, swallowed and gave him a long look.

“I’m on a diet,” she explained.

He rolled his eyes, “Another one?!”

“The Selections are next month, I need to lose weight.”

“Why do you need to lose weight?” he said in a huff, “You look perfectly fine.”

“I want to put all chances on my side to get picked by a good Alpha.”

Will snorted, “Please Beth. Don’t start with the Selections. Those things are a disgrace.”

“Speak for yourself.”

He studied her for a moment before licking his lip.

“Do you really believe that? Do you really want to parade in your underwear on a stage for a bunch of horny Alphas to examine you like you’re their next meal? Do you really find that fair or nice?”

She shrugged, “I want to secure my future,” she said in a smaller voice, “Not my fault you want to waste yours!”

Will snorted, “Sure! Because turning yourself into a circus poodle will make your life *great*!”

She blinked at him and remained silent for a short while, just looking at him.

“You know Will,” she said softly, “The other Omegas don’t really understand why I’m still talking to you. They say you have a bad influence.”

Her remark annoyed him greatly, “Why are you talking to me then?”

“You’re my friend.”

“I don’t need your pity,” Will snapped.

“I’m the last friend you’ve got. And it’s not pity. I respect your views even if I don’t understand them. I’m just asking you to do the same.”

He sighed and looked down, “Sorry.”

"You don't want to go to the Selections. Fine, I respect that. Now respect my decision to go. Selections are important to me. I *want* to get picked. I *want* to be a good Omega," Will flinched at her words, "I know you don't like hearing that. But that's not you, that's me."

"I'm sorry," Will said, "You're right, I should respect your decision. I just don't like this. I don't like this world. I... *hate* being an Omega." He looked away.

"I know. But instead of fighting yourself, maybe you should just embrace it. You *are* an Omega and being an Omega can be beautiful."

Will snorted disdainfully, "Please."

"It's true. You just don't see it because you're afraid."

"I'm not!"

"You are! You are afraid. And it's ok to be afraid. But you won't change yourself, no matter how hard you try. No matter the number of Suppressants you take a day. You'll still be an Omega. If you don't want to go to the Selections, don't go. But you have an Alpha who invited you to a Dance. We were half joking this morning, you know. Wheeler is a good Alpha. He's very handsome and I heard he was nice."

"For an Alpha, you mean!"

Bethany gave him a pointed look, "Give him a chance."

Will straightened into his chair, uncomfortable, "Beth..."

"I know you want to say no. You want to say no because you're afraid of what comes next. Don't think about that. Just, go to the Dance. You'll see when you get there."

"Easy for you to say..." he muttered.

"Just, try."

"I don't know..."

“Aren’t you attracted to him?”

“I am. I mean, he’s okay. I guess.”

“Then give it a try. You won’t get another chance like this one.”

He swallowed. He had a bad feeling about this. Giving his chance to an Alpha. What an odd idea.

They finished their lunch and brought their tray back to the racks.

He followed Bethany out of the Cafeteria into the crowd of students that were making their way back to their respective classrooms. From the corner of his eye, he noticed a presence that made him stop in his tracks.

Wheeler was waiting for him a bit further into the hall. Omegas were looking at him in awe. Will swallowed. He knew why Mike was there. The Alpha blinked when he saw him and gave him a small smile, pushing his hands into the pockets of his black pants. He didn’t look much at ease and pressed his lips into a line whenever an Omega pointed at him or whispered his name.

Will took a deep breath. Besides him, Bethany had frozen too. When she saw Mike, she nudged Will in the elbows.

“Don’t screw this up,” she whispered.

Will swallowed again. He waited for the crowd to dissipate. The Omegas were curious but they knew their boundaries and when to respect the privacy of an Alpha-Omega encounter. When it was just the three of them in the hall, he took another sharp intake of air and slowly stepped toward the Alpha.

He crossed the distance between them and his breath caught in his throat. Wheeler was handsome, with his pale skin, high cheekbones, full lips and deep red eyes. And he smelled good too. Will was beginning to feel a bit faint. Stupid hormones!

He side-glanced at Bethany to give himself some courage. The girl cheered at him discreetly and joined the rest of her class, leaving him alone with Mike in the deserted corridor.

Will swallowed again, feeling both anxious and a bit afraid. It was never a good thing to be alone with an Alpha and his brain was beginning to buzz again with a renewed panic attack. He licked his lip and looked up at Mike who was staring at him expectantly. There was a glimmer of warmth in those dark eyes. Mike seemed to sense his apprehension and offered him a shy smile.

“Hi,” he said.

“Hi,” Will replied, his heart jumping to the back his throat.

Mike bit his lip. He truly didn’t know how to start. He was so bad at this. And Will’s beauty was a terrible distraction.

“Uhm, did you have time to think about... you know, the Dance?” he swallowed.

Will bit his lip. For an Alpha, he didn’t look so confident. It was almost endearing. *Almost.*

“Yes.”

Mike’s eyes suddenly lit up, going from dark red to vermillion, “And?”

He looked hopeful. It was almost endearing. *Almost.*

Will licked his lip with the tip of his tongue, “Listen,” he began awkwardly, not looking at the Alpha, “I’m really bad at this whole Alpha-Omega thing.”

“Me too,” Mike said.

Will chuckled. Mike chuckled too. They both stared at their feet in a short moment of silence, not really knowing how to continue.

Will glanced at the Alpha and cleared his throat, “I don’t know what you want from me.”

“Nothing!” Mike hurried to say, “I told you. I just want to go to the Dance. Nothing more.”

Will snorted, "Please, I'm not stupid. I know your kind. You guys always want something."

"I'm not like that."

Will locked eyes with him, "You're an Alpha."

Mike blinked, "I am."

Will held his gaze, "I'm *not* into Alphas. It's nothing personal but Alphas are not my thing."

Mike swallowed a thick lump that had formed in his throat. In the pockets of his black pants, his hands were getting clammy. He was sensing the rejection coming his way in a blast that was going to hurt. Who was he kidding? He should have expected that. It was well known that Will Byers despised Alphas and was a very special Omega. Dustin had been clear about that too. And who was he to blame Will? Alphas were *gross*. Had he been an Omega, he wouldn't have liked himself either.

"I know," Mike said, "I heard. I wish you no harm, I swear. I mean it when I say that I want nothing from you. Nothing that you don't want to give anyway."

"So you *want* something!" Will pointed out.

Mike blinked, "No!" he looked away and licked his lip, trying to communicate with the Omega without antagonizing him, "I'm not like the other Alphas, I swear."

"And I know you probably believe that," Will noted slowly, looking unimpressed.

Mike's shoulders fell and he sighed, "No. Listen, I won't ask you for anything. I promise. And if you're only willing to give me a bit of your time, I'll be happy with just that. I like you. I really do."

Upon hearing the admission, Will's heart began to beat faster. Wheeler *liked* him. He didn't know if he should have felt honored or horrified. He didn't trust Alphas, didn't trust them one bit. But Wheeler was looking at him with huge eyes and he seemed to be

carrying his feelings on his sleeves. And it was probably just another Alpha strategy to get into his pants - or he truly was showing genuine vulnerability to the Omega - but Will swallowed, remembering Bethany's words. Maybe she was right. Maybe this was an occasion to take. Just once. To see.

He observed the Alpha a minute longer, weighted his options and nodded, feeling his chest constrict as he did so.

"I'll go with you," he said, sounding detached and nonchalant.

Mike blinked, stunned, "You... You will?"

Will blinked, "Yah."

"Why? You said you didn't like Alphas..."

Will shrugged, "Why not? Just, don't expect anything more."

Mike swallowed and shook his head energetically, "I won't! Thank you," he smiled, "I'm glad."

Will pressed his lips in a thin line, nodding slightly. Silence returned. Mike's heart was racing in his chest. His head was spinning with too much adrenaline.

In front of him, Will sniffled and bit his lip, "I'll see you around, I suppose."

Mike nodded, "Yes. I'll pick you up," he stuttered, hating how poor it sounded to his own ears.

Will didn't seem to have noticed. He gave him a last gesture of agreement with his chin and turned away, leaving Mike alone, feeling as if the world had suddenly started going round the other way.

Mike swallowed.

Will had said yes! He was taking the boy he loved to the Dance! Life was beautiful! He just hoped he would be able to warm the ice around Will's heart somehow. He had to find a way. He had to try.

Notes for the Chapter:

Let me know what you thought of it :)

3. Mismatched

Summary for the Chapter:

Will doubts, Mike can't wait.

Dinner at the Wheelers was silent and awkward. A whole roasted chicken throned in the middle of the long table in its silver plate, accompanied by vegetable casseroles of all sorts and salad. The eighteenth century room was lit by a candelabra on the buffet and an impressive ceiling chandelier Mike always bumped head into when standing.

There was no sound except for the clicking of cutlery on porcelain plates and glasses made of crystal. Holly was munching on her food without any enthusiasm, her eyes dull and shoulders slouched in apathy. Ted sipped on his wine and cut pieces of chicken in his plate with abnormal energy, not sparing a single glance to the audience around him. His wife ate in polite contrition, holding the fork in her white glove as if it were the most delicate thing. Regularly, she took the napkin on her lap and tapped it lightly on her lips to erase non-existent stains of food.

Mike wasn't hungry.

His mind was busy elsewhere. He couldn't stop thinking that Will had agreed to go with him to the dance, that he would be his date. Well, sort of. What should he do? How to behave? Will wasn't a fragile Omega and hated being pampered. He was proud and independent. Should Mike pick him up at his house as Tradition required? Should they just meet at the school instead? The dance was still in a few days so he had time to think but he didn't want to misbehave. Sure, Will had said this didn't mean anything but Mike wanted to make a good impression. He wasn't stupid and knew this was his only shot.

Just as he lost himself in thought, his mother decided to end the oppressive silence and replace it with smalltalk.

"I saw the Vandenburgs today," she said in a voice so sweet, her words seemed to be made of honey, "They were coming back from

grocery shopping.”

She paused. Mike nodded blankly. He had no idea why she was talking about that at all.

“Deidre was with her daughter,” she continued, “I hadn’t seen her in quite a while. She’s grown into a beautiful young Lady. Very well-mannered.”

There was another pause. Mike swallowed. He was beginning to have an idea as to why she’d chosen this specific subject instead of any other. Barely three seconds later, she confirmed his suspicions.

“She’s still waiting for an Alpha to invite her to the Dance,” she struck the final blow.

Although prepared for this conclusion, he couldn’t help the muscles of his eyes from stretching in a roll and swallowed a sigh of annoyance, his hand curling around the fork he was holding. Suitors. *Again.* They would never stop harassing him. He filled his lungs with air, giving himself a second to think over his words.

At first, he chose to remain silent, pretend he hadn’t heard or made the connection with himself. It didn’t work and Karen pressed on, her eyes insistently searching for his.

“Micheal?”

He swallowed again, forcing his gaze down to avoid meeting her.

“What?” he mumbled, his face almost dropped on his plate.

“Maybe you could invite her. She’s a lovely girl, really.”

“I’m not interested in Mrs Vanderburg’s daughter,” he answered as calmly as he could.

“You should,” Ted said in a voice devoid of affection, speaking for the first time since dinner had started, “The Vandenburgs are a prestigious family. They make strong Alphas and their Omegas are good breeders.”

Mike gagged. He wanted to vomit.

"I'll pass, thanks."

Father and son eyed each other menacingly. Ted finished munching and swallowed a mouthful. Mike glared at him without blinking.

"They also have a son," Karen tried again cheerfully, desperate to ease the tension, "If that's more your thing."

"I'm not interested in the Vandenburgs at all!" he snapped out of impatience.

Awkward silence settled. Mother and daughter were staring at him agape, Holly raising her brow, Karen's lip quivering. This was uncalled for. Mike knew this. His behavior went against Decorum. Ted hadn't stopped eating and munched loudly on pieces of chicken he kept pushing in his mouth.

He was the first to break the silence, before Karen had time to temper the mood with another honey-dipped answer.

"A pity, really," he conceded in a half sigh, "That you haven't signed for the Selections already is bad enough but to hear such blatant disinterest is nothing short of insolence!"

Ted flashed red eyes at his son. Mike flared his nostrils at his father's reprimand. He wouldn't give him the satisfaction of an answer.

Karen tried to soothe her husband, "I'm sure Micheal meant well -"

"- stay out of this, my Lady!" Ted commanded.

She recoiled immediately, clenching her jaw, averting her eyes. Holly sucked in a breath and mimicked her mother. Mike didn't flinch and hadn't looked away.

Dinner finished as awkward as it started.

Their Omega housekeeper came to clear the empty plates, Karen excused herself out of the room and Holly followed suit. Mike remained alone with Ted who had served himself a glass of Cognac to

ease the passing of food as he always did after a meal.

Mike inhaled deeply, keeping his eyes fixed on his porcelain plate. He waited a second more before lifting off the chair, letting the feet rack against the wooden floor. His father was silent and Mike walked past him toward the door.

"Micheal," he suddenly said, his voice echoing in the silent room.

Mike came to a halt, his hand raised in front of him, fingers touching the smooth round handle of the white double doors.

"I trust you to understand the importance of a good match for this family," he continued, not looking at his son.

Mike swallowed, "I do, Sir."

"I should hope so. I heard... rumors about a certain Omega boy catching your affection. For the sake of this family and the reputation that precedes it, I do hope I heard the name wrong. I wouldn't tolerate that my son mingles with street cats. Please, do not disappoint me."

Mike sucked in a breath but didn't respond. Instead, he pressed forward and turned on the handle with a small tremor in his hand.

He went to lock himself into his room, barely concealing his anger.

Feeling down and empty, he grabbed the controller he had left on the bed beside him and switched his TV on. The screen colored with faces he recognized as belonging to a program called *Chiara's diary*, a romantic sitcom based on a book, adored by Omegas and turned to ridicule by Alphas.

Mike didn't like it. Not because it was Omega oriented, he just found the concept debasing and offensive to Omegas and Alphas alike. The characters and plot were pretty average and corresponded to the codes pushed and endorsed by the social order around him. The Alpha was male, dominant and aggressive and pursued an Omega female, quiet and submissive. The Omega kept rejecting the Alpha's

advances but the latter didn't listen and kept harassing the Omega, almost forcing the girl into a relationship she didn't seem to want.

For a reason that was beyond Mike, this belligerent chase was apparently *romantic*.

He sure had a very distinctive vision of what romance should have been like and it certainly didn't involve pushing anyone unwilling into a relationship. Of course, he rarely gave his opinion. He did once and Vincent promptly told him that this was an Omega thing, that he couldn't understand. Vincent was probably right. Omegas seemed to genuinely enjoy this show after all... The books had sold like crazy and now the show obtained record audience ratings week after week.

He wondered what Will thought of it... Knowing the Omega, he probably despised the show at least as much as Mike, if not more. The prospect made Mike smile warmly. He couldn't imagine himself treating Will this way. And the idea of having a compliant little Omega that never voiced their opinion and behaved like a passive puppy wasn't at all appealing to him. He wanted a relationship based on love and trust, not a contract into slavery. And if he were perfectly honest, he preferred when the Omega was proactive, in every aspect of the relationship. The thought made him blush. This was even more taboo than ignoring the Selections. Mike didn't know any other Alpha who shared his... *preferences*. Sure, he was still young but he hadn't found anyone to whom he could talk. His sister shared his rebellious temper but from what he knew, she was a perfectly normally wired Alpha for the rest and Steve, although not without resources to defend himself, was compliant.

Mike was an anomaly.

There were days he didn't think he was an Alpha at all. Alphas didn't think like him. They didn't want the things he wanted. They found *Chiara's diary* or whatever her name was to be a stupid Omega show but they didn't think anything was particularly wrong with it. They despised it because it was written for Omegas and that everything Omega related was considered stupid and lesser. They didn't condemn the show for its content or the message it portrayed.

Mike sighed. The scene before him made him uncomfortable and had

his parents walked into his room at this moment, he would have been in a very awkward situation. There was no real nudity. This wasn't a pornographic show after all but the characters' positions made everything painfully obvious. There was no gentleness, no respect. It was brutal and debasing. It made Mike feel sick and he switched the TV off with a grimace of repulsion.

He would never treat his Omega this way. Never. How could anyone be so disrespectful to someone else? What kind of society could ever find such behavior normal? Or worse, *expected*?

Because that's what was expected of Alphas. Alphas were supposed to behave like the main character of that revolting show. It was just Mike not agreeing to it.

He threw the remote away and went to hide under his covers.

Why had Will accepted to go with him? Could this mean Will was somewhat *interested* in him? Could he have a shot? He really wasn't a normal Alpha but apparently Will didn't like normal Alphas so this could be his luck.

He bit his lip.

Had Will accepted out of pity?

He paused.

Did he care? No! He was just too glad that Will gave him the honor of a moment with him. He just hoped Will wouldn't change his mind at the last minute. He would do his best to make sure Will had a good time, even if it didn't go further than that.

"Have you seen the episode last night?"

"Oh yes! I loved it!"

Will rolled his eyes at the discussions around him and pushed into the queue with his lunch tray, desperate to find a quieter spot after being served. For long minutes, the conversations about the show

continued excitedly and Will was trying really hard to ignore his anger at their disbelieving cheers. He hated that show. He felt insulted just hearing about it.

"It was amazing!" an Omega continued, "Chiara is so lucky!"

"He's so handsome! I would give anything to be in her shoes!"

"I can't believe this was the last episode of the season!"

"We'll have to wait for months for the sequel."

Will inwardly sighed in relief and filled his plates with veggies and eggs.

"What about you?" an Omega suddenly turned toward him.

Will blinked, stunned to have someone talk to him directly. Apart from Bethany, Omegas usually never bothered talking to him or acknowledging his existence.

"What about me, what?" he repeated to be sure he hadn't misheard.

"What did you think of the episode?" the Omega pressed as if Will was particularly stupid.

"I haven't seen it," he casually said.

His interlocutor gasped in shock, "You haven't? Why?!"

Will barely shrugged, still holding his tray, "I don't watch that show."

The Omegas around him stopped dead in their discussions and turned to look at him with wide, terrified eyes, as if the simple admission was either inconceivable or worthy of a crime. Will could have announced murder or the end of the world, it wouldn't have been worse.

"You don't watch it?" one asked in a breathless whisper.

"No."

"Why?" another squealed, wrinkling his nose disdainfully, "Are you

too good for it?”

“Actually yes, I am”, Will answered calmly, “This show is dumb and offensive.”

“Offensive?” one parroted, confused.

“How is the show offensive?! Are you nuts?” another added, a bit more defensively.

Will shrugged again, unimpressed and unaffected by the sudden hostility around him, “Chiara is a one dimensional character without any depth at all. She has no personality, no ambition, no voice of her own. She has no motives or interest and the only thing there is about her at all is that Gideon wants to... date her? Somehow? As for Gideon, he’s an aggressive control freak obsessed with his appearance and social success who doesn’t care about anyone but himself. He’s cruel, manipulative and shallow and honestly I don’t even understand how could anyone with a brain and a semblance of self respect want to be involved in any way with a freak like that? This show is awful. It perpetuates the idea that Omegas are weak and passive with no sense of self. And I just don’t think Chiara is a healthy role model at all!”

His speech was followed by deep silence. The other Omegas were looking at him with blank expressions. Eventually, after a long, awkward moment, one of them scoffed at Will and rolled her eyes.

“Wow, they weren’t wrong about you. You *are* from another world!”

“Yeah!” another chimed with a grimace, “What is wrong with you? This is just a show about a love story!”

“It’s harmless!”

“You’re a freak, Byers!”

“Yeah, such a freak!”

“Keep your distorted views to yourself! Some people still like to dream!”

They turned around and continued to bicker after him. Will remained behind in the queue with his tray, feeling a bit like a fool.

“To think that Wheeler is interested in him...” he heard a few Omegas whisper.

“Wheeler?!”

“Yes. That’s such a waste!”

“You’re joking right?!”

“No, no. That’s what I heard.”

“No way!”

Will shook his head and reached a lone table. Bethany had gone to preparation class for the Selections and since Will refused to go, he wasn’t on the list and found himself alone for lunch. The other Omegas were still staring at him. He wasn’t looking at them but could feel their malevolent gazes on his neck, reminding him that he didn’t belong here. Maybe they were right and he was wrong. Maybe he was the issue. He had tried to watch the show and enjoy it, like any other Omega. But no matter how hard he tried, he *was* offended. This didn’t look like a love story. He sighed and picked on his green beans with a heavy heart. He would have given anything to be a normal Omega. He would have given anything to enjoy *Chiara’s Diary*.

His next class was biology and he couldn’t have been less interested. The subjects were always crude and made him ill and the teacher, Mr Carlton, was an old grumpy and tactless Omega that he really didn’t like. He took his seat in the back of the class, waiting for Bethany to arrive. She was among the last, wearing a smile on her lips. At the same time, the teacher stepped into the class with his usual disdainful expression, draped in his black robes that made him look like a medieval monk.

“Open your books page 43,” he said without even taking the time to greet them, throwing his suitcase on the desk.

Will swallowed and did as told. When he saw the title of the lesson,

he felt his lunch heave back up into his pipe. Around him, the students began to chat with each other, something that immediately annoyed the old man who waved his hand around.

“Quiet, quiet, quiet!”

The chatting stopped and they turned their attention back on the blackboard on which he was writing with a piece of white chalk. When he stepped back from the board, Will's breath caught in his throat. Written in full capital letters and white ominously shone the words "CLAIM AND KNOTTING". A lump formed in his throat. Around him, the students began to whisper again but the teacher ignored them, casting stern glances all around the room.

"The Selections approaching, it is now vital that we delve deeper into certain topics that need to be known, if only to avoid a moment of ignorance and embarrassment," he explained in a dry, cutting tone that left no room for argument or question.

He pulled the handle of a poster above the blackboard until the latter had covered the whole surface. It was an anatomy poster that depicted detailed schematic drawings of the Alpha and Omega's genitalia with a strong focus on the Alpha. Some teenagers began to chuckle, covering their mouth with their hands. Even Bethany's cheeks had colored. Will's eyes squinted at the image in front of him and he looked away in shame and disgust, his tongue poking out of his mouth with a gag.

The teacher remained impassive and glared at them, "Silence!" he hissed, "Laugh all you want, you'll laugh far less when your Alpha knots you for the very first time unprepared and you have to deal with the pain. We'll see who cackles then."

The threatening tone had the desired effect and the young Omegas sobered up, growing anxious instead. Will was feeling uneasy and grabbed his hands together, hiding the pictures from his book with his arms. Mr Carlton eyed every one of them with a dark expression and waited to calm to have returned before he spoke again.

"Now, I'm not too stupid to think that none of you in this room ever experienced knotting. But for the sake of this class, we'll pretend you

haven't. For those who do not know - if *some* of you don't - the Claim refers to the first intercourse between a bonded Alpha and their Omega, mostly occurring after the Omega has been picked by an Alpha during the Selections. Whatever happens before that is nothing but meaningless frolics if anything ever happened. For those who'd still doubt it, only the Selections render official the bonding and choosing of an Alpha toward an Omega. All the rest is moot. And I no not care if the liberals or any other progressive weaklings try to say otherwise. The Claim is from an Alpha to an Omega. Never the other way round. An Omega can make the Offer if they so want to take the first step - which I do not recommend - but the biological Claim belongs to the Alpha and the Alpha alone."

Will tried to even his breathing. He really didn't like the teacher's tone and his implications.

The teacher grabbed a stick and pointed at a large red and purple organ covered in a hundreds of tiny white points. The image brought a pout of disgust on Will's lips.

"What you see here is the Alpha's copulatory organ. This one belongs to a male Alpha in Rut. When an Alpha is aroused, it grows twice to three times its initial size. The white points that you see here poke from the sides when ejaculation is near and fix themselves deep into the Omega's channel during penetration," he pointed at another image with his stick to a long tube that seemed to come out from the organ's tip and about to enter a tiny orifice, "This is the knot. When an Alpha reaches their peak, it elongates and slips into the Omega's cervix to laid its seed directly into the incubation channel, rising up the chances of expectancy to its maximum. This is what we call the Knotting process. For female Alphas, it works the same but the organ is smaller and retracts after coitus."

The chatter resumed. Will was feeling sick. His hand dug into the pocket of his vest and he grabbed two Suppressants that he popped into his mouth, just to ensure that watching those disgusting drawings and *listening* to Mr Carlton hadn't made him *expectant*. God, the Alpha anatomy was a thing of nightmares! Those spines that were supposed to fix themselves into his flesh so that he couldn't move or put the thing *out* of his body! What kind of a Creator created horrors like that! His eyes focused on the tiny opening of the incubation

channel and the rather large appendage they called the Knot and he wanted to vomit or cry.

"I will not lie to you," the teacher said again, "This process isn't without physical drawbacks. There will be pain and there will be blood. Especially for the male Omegas here as your incubation channel is smaller than the female Omegas. However, the positive side of the whole affair - the *only* positive side may I add - is the reward of expectancy," he suddenly focused on Will and the boy withdrew into his chair under the scrutiny of his gaze, "I know that some of you indulge in this poison they called Suppressants. Contrary to what you've been told, they will not help you. Sooner or later, the Suppressants effect will fade, especially in the presence of an Alpha, and you will be sorry for even trying to suppress your very nature."

He hadn't looked away from Will but Will held his stare with a grimace of repulsion and defiance.

"Are you ok?" Bethany asked as they walked to their next period.

"I'm fine," Will replied stiffly, focusing on his steps to keep himself steady.

"Is this about the class?"

He didn't answer. She wasn't a dupe but he wouldn't give her the satisfaction of a reply. Yes, it was about the class. How couldn't it be? But it was also about himself and his own stupidity, Mr Carlton's words resonating in his head. How could he have accepted to go with Wheeler to the Dance?! An Alpha! Sure, Mike had promised nothing reprehensible would happen but Alphas were cunning and dishonest by nature. Their only goal in life was to dominate, control and knot the bodies of others. They couldn't be trusted. They were all evil to their core.

Will knew this and yet, he had fallen into Mike's trap like a debutante!

Mr Carlton rang in his head again. The presence of an Alpha

increased the risk of Heats and no matter how friendly and soft-spoken Mike looked, Will knew this was nothing but an act. After all, Mike had the same thing between his legs as the monstrous appendage covered in tearing daggers from the drawings. Maybe he was going to try and knot him? Claim him? Will had always heard that the Dance was just a pre-selection for the Alphas. Omega shopping in disguise. He wasn't safe and he had been an idiot to believe he could ever be.

His breath caught in his throat as he hurried his steps toward the class. He couldn't go. He wouldn't take any risk.

Mike smiled to himself as he took the white lily from the shelf. It was perfect for Will, fierce and elegant, able to grow independently without aid just like him. He bit his lip and paid for the small bouquet. It wasn't much but he hoped Will would like it.

Author's Note:

I hope you liked it.

Let me know your thoughts.

It could get a bit dark as I want to explore social pressures and how people try to escape and be themselves. I'll see how that goes.

Cheers!